

### Fleeing conflict - trajectories of displaced persons: conference documentation

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# Fleeing Conflict— Trajectories of Displaced Persons

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

Elvan Isikozlu, Susanne Heinke (Eds.) \ BICC



## SUMMARY

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On 3 November 2016, BICC hosted its annual International Academic Conference, focussing this year on the pressing global issue of internal displacement and refugee movements. Almost 65 million people are currently displaced worldwide, most of whom have been displaced for more than five years. Entitled “Fleeing Conflict—Trajectories of Displaced Persons”, the conference brought together academics from around the world to present and discuss conceptual and empirical research on the causes, consequences of and solutions for forced migration in current conflicts and displacement settings.

In his welcome address, Thomas Grünewald, State Secretary at the Ministry for Innovation, Science and Research of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia stressed the importance of innovative research on displacement and integration. Unlike some of the discourse in this field, the conference focussed on the issue of displacement from the perspective of the displaced themselves, highlighting their agency in the sometimes cyclical and often interrupted processes of departure, transit and arrival. Three consecutive panels were convened, beginning with scholarly presentations on the “Causes and Conditions of Displacement”, “(Interrupted) Transit and Forced Immobility” and finally, “Durable Solutions for Protracted Displacement”. A concluding panel summarized some of the key points of the day, including the need for more political solutions that target the root causes, and not only the consequences, of protracted displacement.

The conference was generously funded by the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn and the US Consulate General in Düsseldorf.

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View through a fence of the Strait of Gibraltar from the Moroccan city of Tangier. Europe and Africa are separated by only 14 km of ocean at the Strait's narrowest point. Many refugees continue to cross over in the hopes of a better life in Europe.

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**Thomas Grünewald** \ State Secretary at the Ministry for Innovation, Science and Research of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, in his welcome address underlined the following:

“By the end of 2015 more than 65 million people were displaced worldwide. 65 million refugees stand for 65 million different motives, causes, roots, experiences, expectations hopes and goals which all these people associate with their displacement. This number shows us even more clearly that we still know too little about the process of fleeing from conflict and refugees. This is the reason why we have launched a specific funding programme in North Rhine-Westphalia entitled ‘Research on displacement and integration’. (...)

What measure of reintegration or local integration could help to prevent continuing or emerging potentials for conflict? What is the role of displaced persons in peace processes? And how can emergency relief and developmental work be sensibly connected? BICC puts the perspectives of the people concerned at the heart of its activities while looking for answers to these questions and developing recommendations for policymakers and civil society.”



**Conrad Schetter** \ BICC, providing his opening remarks



**Conference participants** \ listening to the opening address





**Elisabeth Ferris** \ Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, giving the keynote address

## **"It seems as if the whole world is on the move"**

Elisabeth Ferris is a Research Professor with the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Her keynote address was based on her vast experience and observations as a researcher on refugee issues and more recently as Senior Advisor to the UN General Assembly's Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York (2016). In a rich and thoughtful presentation, Ferris outlined general characteristics of protracted displacement and pointed to some troubling assumptions, trends and questions that need to be dealt with in the search for long-term solutions.

Ferris began her presentation with an observation: The year 2016 has been a year of dramatic photos with scenes of people on the move and children in crowded boats. Less visible are groups of people and children who find themselves in protracted displacement situations, which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines as five years or more without a solution. Ferris has found that protracted displacement does not provide the same appeal or sense of urgency for policymakers as do photos of makeshift camps.

Ferris outlined thirteen general characteristics of displacement that she believes are seldom recognized by policymakers, particularly at the international level. The first set of characteristics dealt with the dynamic nature of displacement—the often very individual and idiosyncratic process of deciding to flee a conflict; the multiple categories of displace-

ment that people may occupy over the course of their displacement (IDP to refugee or vice versa); the many vulnerabilities that displaced people experience throughout their journey, including the breakdown of social protection networks; and finally, the ultimate vulnerability of those who are trapped and unable to move. She highlighted how the lack of access to childhood education increasingly appears to be a driver of onward movement from a first country of asylum, particularly since most temporary displacement situations have a way of becoming protracted. She also stressed the need for more attention on displacement-affected communities and what the mass movement of people away from or toward these communities mean for those within them. Another set of characteristics dealt with the perception of displacement—the focus on ‘growing’ statistics of displaced people that need to be analyzed and unpacked; the use of the term ‘crisis’ since the



The audience \ following the keynote address

arrival of refugees to Europe; the perception that most refugees are fleeing from the Syrian conflict as opposed to other raging conflicts, such as Yemen; and the fickle nature of the media, which may soon fatigue from reporting on the issue. While Ferris acknowledged that humanitarian assistance for displaced populations is getting better at distributing and targeted aid, she criticized that humanitarian funds are still used too often as a fig leaf for political action. The underlying issue of how to resolve the conflict continues to be side-tracked.

With these characteristics in mind, Ferris continued her presentation with a consideration of some of the more specific and troubling questions for each category of displaced population that arise in research, practice and policymaking. For example, with regard to IDPs, Ferris pointed out a fundamental conundrum: IDPs are the responsibility of the national government to protect and assist even if government policies or actions are the reason that people had to forcibly leave their homes. Providing humanitarian assistance to government-controlled areas in a conflict-affected country is also problematic because it requires the permission of national governments, which affects how the aid is perceived by the community and/or may inadvertently support a problematic regime. What is more, Ferris said that no government wants to admit that it has IDPs, as this would be a sign of failure, making it difficult to get accurate data on the numbers of IDPs in a country.

With regard to refugees, Ferris raised more questions than she was able to answer, demonstrating the complexity of and necessity for continued research in this field. For example, she pointed to the recognized need to shift from humanitarian emergency relief to development assistance for refugees and host communities, but noted the lack of knowledge on how and when this shift should happen. Similarly, the need to support refugee host communities and to promote resilience among refugees is widely accepted in political and practitioner circles—but how is this actually done? Finally, Ferris asked another fundamental question that was echoed by panellists and audience members throughout

the day: Apart from funding, what does it mean to globally share responsibility for refugees? And does this responsibility extend to the large movements of people? While international law assumes that migration is voluntary, Ferris confirmed that this is not, in fact, true. Mass migration, she maintained, remains a very grey area.

In her conclusion, Ferris underlined the importance of these questions and challenges to European countries, the European Union (EU), and the international community. The challenges are not only political in nature, she said, but also moral. Ferris revealed that the international community has an opportunity to address some of these questions over the next two years, when two new global compacts will be developed: the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (for 2018), and the Global Compact on Refugees (for 2018). She expressed her belief that Germany is in a good position to show leadership in the development of these compacts, as the German government has been a vocal advocate of refugee issues and is acting Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. What is sorely needed, Ferris concluded, is strong global governance and moral leadership on the issue of displaced populations; but most of all, a deeper commitment to prevent and resolve violent conflicts.





Esther Meininghaus \ BICC, presenting in the panel on “Causes and Conditions of Displacement”

## Causes and Conditions of Displacement

What conditions are displaced persons confronted with and how do they cope? Esther Meininghaus, BICC, Markus Rudolf, BICC, and Kristian Berg Harpviken, PRIO, presented cases from Syria, Myanmar and Afghanistan to illustrate these questions in a thought-provoking opening panel moderated by BICC International Board Member, Sami Faltas, University of Groningen (retired).

## Displacement scenarios in the Syrian conflict

Looking at patterns of IDP movements in Syria, where half of the population is affected by displacement, Esther Meininghaus, BICC, questioned whether this is a side-effect of war, or whether something else is at play. In trying to answer her question, Meininghaus referred to theories of displacement atrocities, a relatively new approach that aims to help understand why certain methods of warfare, such as displacement atrocities, are chosen by perpetrators and how exactly they function. In her presentation, she focussed on two aspects that explain some of the displacement movements in Syria: Mechanisms that are used to enforce displacement and the availability of humanitarian aid. With regard to the first, Meininghaus suggested a distinction between two general types of forced migration in Syria: Forced migration where people have a choice of where to go, and another where they do not. In the former, displacement occurs for three general reasons: A threat to individual life as a result of aerial bombardments and the systematic demolition of whole residential areas. The latter type of forced displacement can also be referred to as 'forced relocation' because people are forcibly removed and brought to areas decided upon by the belligerents. Examples of forced relocation include besiegement and forced evacuation.

The effects of these displacement movements on individuals are multiple and far-reaching: Meininghaus listed the loss of personal documents including identity and land ownership documentation, a breakdown of social support systems, the overcrowding of areas where humanitarian services are offered, pressure on host communities and the physical and mental exhaustion of the population. She argued that the response to the IDPs crisis has been highly problematic: The Syrian government has refused to allow the international community to establish large-scale camps, so there are only informal, 'self-managed' camps being managed by landowners or not at all. The UNHCR has led a shelter response, but the Syrian government has not granted the permission to implement it properly. Finally, in oppositional areas, the government has been trying to keep aid out of these areas, although some NGOs are attempting to maintain shelter upgrades.

With regard to the availability of humanitarian aid, Meininghaus revealed that while there are no formal IDP camps in Syria, there is the phenomenon that most aid goes into certain areas of the country and not in others. The question she asked is whether this causes a pull of people across front lines and if so, whether this renders the international community complicit in supporting the movement of IDPs into certain areas. In terms of recommendations, Meininghaus called on the need for more systematic data on IDP movements to better understand why and where they move. She also recommended the possibility of anchoring displacement atrocities in international law, so that these methods do not continue to be used with impunity.

## Coping strategies of displaced persons in Myanmar

Markus Rudolf, BICC, provided insights on the situation of displaced persons in Myanmar. Despite a long history of ethnic conflict and military rule, the former opposition party won the parliamentary elections in 2015, and now the country is seen as a positive example of democratization. The National Ceasefire Agreement of 2015 raised hopes for a timely and easy return of hundreds of million displaced people from Myanmar. Is the return of the displaced now only a matter of time? Rudolf attempted to answer these questions with the findings of his field research in 2016 on ethnic minorities in the border areas of Myanmar and Thailand. More than 135 ethnic groups live in the country and are confronted with ongoing complex conflicts and riots. The ceasefire process does not cover the whole country, and the peace process has not yet reached the people. Some live in areas inside of government or military control, while others live in areas controlled by ethnic armed groups or disputed areas.

Rudolf referred to the case of the Rohingya, which is more present in the media than any of the other conflicts involving ethnic minorities. The Rohingya are deprived of the right of citizenship and located in remote areas, which makes them easier to control by the government. The Rohingya people have been heavily discriminated against and are completely dependent on aid, since they have no legal right to work.

Even though internal violent conflicts continue, international humanitarian aid is fading. This puts IDPs and camp residents under pressure to go back home, even though their security is not guaranteed. What is more, it threatens their coping strategies because these are often entirely built upon the provision of humanitarian aid. Rudolf therefore criticized the curtailing of humanitarian aid. The political reform process has not done anything thus far to address the discrimination of ethnic minorities in the first place, nor have major results been achieved in the peace process. Furthermore, he argued that the vicious cycle of poverty still exists for these groups and needs to be addressed to support the most vulnerable among them. Rudolf concludes that while humanitarian aid is a very important factor in the lives of displaced people in Myanmar, long term solutions can only be provided politically.

## Afghanistan's vicious cycle of conflict and migration

Kristian Berg Harpviken, PRIO, presented the issue of refugee militarization in the context of Afghanistan. Prior to the Syrian displacement crisis, Afghanistan faced the largest displacement situation since World War II. In addition to a high number of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan, the number of internally displaced persons continues to grow due to renewed or intensified fighting.



Kristian Berg Harpviken \ PRIO, talked about the issue of refugee militarization in the context of Afghanistan

The issue of refugee militarization was first raised in “Escape from Violence” by Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo (1989) and provoked a debate in the refugee research community. The topic was already a known issue to practitioners in the field, but the book was the first to document it. More literature followed in the 2000s and focussed on the role of the state in the militarization of refugees, or the role of humanitarian aid. Harpviken approached his analysis from the perspective of the rebel groups. His questions focussed on the origins and development of rebel movements prior to exile, the sustainability and growing capacities of these groups in exile and the reasons for successful militant action upon return.

Harpviken revealed that the militarization of Afghan refugees took place in different phases, for example in Pakistan throughout the 1980s, or during the regime change in 1992 when political movements in exile rapidly returned to the country to assume power in the new regime. The Taliban emerged between 1994 and 1996 in an exiled environment, and their remobilization in 2003 is an example of refugee militarization.

Several mechanisms play a central role in refugee militarization: The pre-existence of an organized group and opportunities for this group to grow in exile; the provision of resources by rebel groups to displaced persons to secure their allegiance; and the promise of rebel groups to protect displaced persons

to gain their loyalty. Religious institutions also play a significant role in the socialization of people, as well as transnationalism in the forms of networks before, during and after exile. Harpviken concluded his presentation with a call for new perspectives on refugee militarization to identify vulnerable populations, due to a lack of alternative livelihood options.

The ensuing discussion centred on the question of humanitarian aid and its role in the nexus of conflict and migration. Harpviken noted that the absence of a global network of humanitarianism makes the sector highly fragmented, problematic and puts it under immense strain. He questioned, however, what the world would look like without humanitarian aid? Would the situation of displaced persons be any better, or worse? Meininghaus called for the restoration of humanitarian aid. She identified two key problems in how it is implemented: First, the

restriction of access to populations of concern and the prohibition of cooperating with unlicensed NGOs; and second, a lack of mechanisms for the accountability of humanitarian aid agencies. Both issues are important, especially with regard to aid workers on the ground, who put their lives at risk to help others. Rudolf provided a concluding comment on the work of humanitarian agencies: They are necessary to support people in need over the short term, but in the long run, political action is required to provide lasting solutions.

**Sami Faltas** (r.) \ University of Groningen (retired), moderated the panel. Markus Rudolf, BICC, provided insights on the situation of displaced people in Myanmar







**Claudia Aradau** (m.) \ King's College London, moderated the panel. To her left, Katja Mielke, BICC, and Benjamin Etzold, BICC; to her right Morten Bøås, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

## (Interrupted) Transit and Forced Immobility

This panel addressed the transit of displaced persons, which is often a lengthy process characterized by forced immobility, culminating in so-called protracted displacement situations. Moreover, it often includes multiple and cyclical displacement and return processes. Benjamin Etzold, BICC, Morten Bøås, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Katja Mielke, BICC, presented a mixture of conceptual and empirical research on transit and forced immobility. The panel was moderated by BICC International Board Member Claudia Aradau, King's College London.

## (Im)mobile lives at the crossroads

Benjamin Etzold, BICC, argued that personal networks of migrants enable mobility or contribute to (forced) immobility. From a scientific point of view, one can distinguish between a spatial and a social perspective on mobility. The spatial perspective identifies a certain path along which people are travelling, which is often displayed on a geographical map, such as the pathways that refugees are taking towards Europe. However, these pathways also rely on social networks to enable people to pass through different social arenas. Etzold confirmed that spatial and social (im)mobility are intrinsically intertwined and cannot be separated from one another.

Etzold further explained that while moving through geographical spaces, people are simultaneously embedded into multiple social places, such as personal or family networks, which play a crucial role in every individual journey. These networks not only contribute to financing or providing emotional support, but also allow access to information through social media and other communications technology. People who cannot draw on the support of such networks are easily confronted with forced immobility—dead ends along their journey, some journeys even ending before they begin, and forcing people to stay in a particular place.

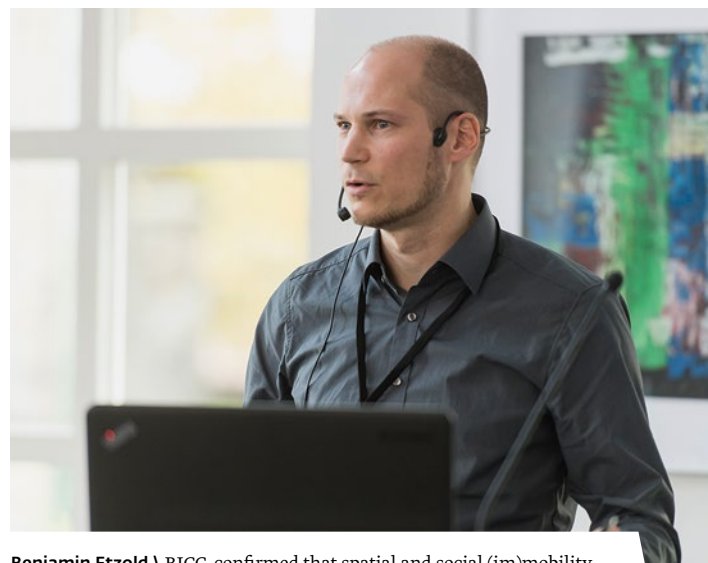
Mobility, nonetheless, always comes with transformation, meaning that social networks, livelihoods, but also places where people leave or arrive undergo a certain change. Etzold stated that xenophobic reactions may not stem from a fear of refugees, but rather from a fear of the transformation that refugees may bring to a certain country such as Germany. The scientific challenge according to Etzold is to now analyze the dynamic livelihoods of forcefully displaced and immobilized people at multiple places along their paths, as well as the interlinkages of social and spatial trajectories and translocal networks.

## Winners and losers along the pathways to Europe

Morten Bøås, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, presented the winners and losers along refugee pathways towards Europe. He observed that there are not only winners and losers within groups of refugees, but also within and among the countries in which they pass through. One of the greatest challenges arising from the massive flow of migrants is that people naturally want to stay close to their home country. Hence, they pour into often already poor neighbouring states, which results in a local overload. Bøås pointed to Lebanon as an extraordinary example because it has surprisingly not collapsed under the pressure of refugees—a phenomenon to which he has dedicated a new paper.

Within the group of refugees coming towards Europe, Bøås argued that a new hierarchy has emerged that divides winners from the losers. The people arriving in Europe are the winners, he explained, because they are the ones who could afford to flee. The demand of this group for a ‘safe’ journey to Europe has even contributed to the formation of another winning group: Those who run the business of human trafficking.

Looking at the broader picture, Bøås explained that traditional tourist magnet countries such as Greece have suffered from a large recession in tourism, which corresponds to the influx of migrants. Other



**Benjamin Etzold** \ BICC, confirmed that spatial and social (im)mobility are intrinsically intertwined

countries such as Turkey have benefited politically from the migration situation, which has resulted in the aggregation of new bargaining power.

Bøås concluded that there has been a development of winners and losers because of a missing global agenda on dealing with refugee flows, coupled with inadequate political action. He strongly advocates for a new political debate that is not fuelled by emotions for or against refugees as it has been in the past, but rather one that gives special attention to poor neighbouring countries that receive large arrivals of migrants.



Morten Bøås \ Norwegian Institute of International Affairs



Katja Mielke \ BICC, underlined that the respondents in urban camps aspire to social inclusion

## Forced immobility in Kabul

Katja Mielke, BICC, presented the results of her empirical research that she conducted as a member of the Crossroads Asia research network. She focussed on the forced spatial immobility of current residents in urban camps in Kabul from their perspective, viewing positionality as a process.

Afghanistan is a primary country of origin of refugees as a result of its long history of violence since the late 1970s. While the repatriation decade of the 1990s saw the large-scale return of Afghan refugees to their country, the last decade of the Taliban regime and the anti-government insurgency has produced an upward trend of conflict-induced displacement, amounting to 1.6 million displaced people in total. Many seek refuge in urban areas, especially in Jalalabad or Kabul, which amplifies already existing urbanization trends and the growth of close-by camps. As a result, urban infrastructure can no longer accommodate the mass arrival of new residents, leading to almost 70 per cent of unauthorized settlements within the city's territory, occupying government / public land.



Mielke reported that many of the respondents in these urban camps have been localized there for 12 to 14 years—illustrating large-scale spatial and social immobility that the government has so far failed to resolve. Her research revealed that residents urgently seek a piece of land and opportunities for employment. Beyond that, they aspire to social inclusion, meaningful political representation, legal rights and justice. She warned, however, that as their aspirations go unfulfilled, their positionality may shift towards other directions, causing them to join armed anti-government groups that fuel new waves of violence, displacement and social exclusion in Afghanistan.

To what extent do social policies influence social mobility? According to Etzold, Germany's current policy of bringing in family members of refugees results in a loss of social potential. Mielke added that land policies of European countries and also countries of origin play an important role in directing future movements, something that needs to be given more attention. Bøås argued that it is necessary to relocate migrants from overloaded countries to other areas to relieve already strained receiving countries.

Mielke also pointed out that closed borders not only lead to greater immobility, but also to more conflicts. Etzold agreed, finding evidence in a rising number of



**Plenary discussion** \ Elke Grawert (l.), BICC, and Andrea Warnecke, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, gave their inputs in the plenary discussion



When the panel opened for debate, the audience highlighted that there is not only a hierarchy between refugees on their journey towards Europe, but also within Europe. While poor asylum seekers get easily confused and stuck within asylum systems, the more educated ones are able to access a better quality of asylum, a phenomenon that needs to be changed.

deaths and suffering in Europe due to increasingly militarized border regimes. According to Bøås, the fact that people are unable to acquire legal access to asylum anywhere also leads to more conflicts. He warned that this lack of access leads to radicalization, criminalization and militarization of the displaced and called for a new discussion about legal migration.





The panelists (l. t. r.) \ Heidrun Bohnet, Nicholas Van Hear, Jocelyn Mawdsley (moderator), Suzan Ilcan and Elke Löbel

## Durable Solutions for Protracted Displacement

With reference to several case studies, Heidrun Bohnet, BICC, Nicholas Van Hear, University of Oxford, Suzan Ilcan, University of Waterloo, and Elke Löbel, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, highlighted some of the needs, challenges and opportunities for durable solutions to current and future displacement scenarios. The panel was moderated by BICC International Board Member Jocelyn Mawdsley, University of Newcastle.

## Challenges faced by South Sudanese returnees

Heidrun Bohnet, BICC, presented her findings from several months of field research in five different sites in South Sudan and Ethiopia. She reported an increase in protracted displacement due to a new outbreak of violence, with one million South Sudanese refugees displaced in neighbouring countries and an estimated 1.7 IDPs within the country. Return is currently not an option for most, she noted, as the security situation is volatile. Also, the ethnic makeup of communities of origin has changed due to displacement, so conflicts over land and property rights seem likely to emerge once displaced populations return. Bohnet argued that return should be analyzed as a dynamic and circular process rather than as an end to the process of migration. For example, families often split up because education and support for women and children are better in camps, while men often return for emotional reasons. Many people return to other areas than they originated from, while host communities face insecurities and competition over assistance and land, forcing the displaced to move again. Consequently, Bohnet found that access to resources in the target location is an essential factor that influences the decision to return. That being said, she also found that corruption and ethnic patronage in South Sudan hinders reintegration, as does the lack of psychological support. Hence, displaced populations often fare better in camps.

by remittances from its citizens who contribute to their host countries and who are, at the same time, able to move freely with their documents. Transnational bodies would need to be established to govern this new polity. This idea is already validated in the transnational practices of refugees and migrants, who have established links and remittance flows between different locations and who organize in collective action the world over. To realize Refugia, ethnic identifications of the nation state would need to be overcome. If successful, Van Hear argues that it would offer a chance to revitalize depopulated areas and to create self-sustaining communities that are integrated into their host countries.

## Citizenship politics and the governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey

Suzan Ilcan, Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo, presented her research team's findings from interviews with refugees and humanitarians in four Turkish cities and in Stockholm, Sweden. The aim of these interviews was to explore different concepts of temporary protection and their implications for the people that are subject to them.

## Imagining Refugia: Transnationalism as a durable solution

Nicholas Van Hear, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, presented a provocative idea for how to resolve status issues of refugees worldwide. Given that the three traditional solutions for protracted refugee situations—repatriation, local integration and resettlement—have been rendered unfeasible by political, economic and social limitations, Van Hear proposed the creation of a refugee nation, a transnational polity linking settled refugee communities with those in transit countries. This nation—'Refugia'—would be supported



Suzan Ilcan \ University of Waterloo



**Elke Löbel** \ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Ilcan reported that Turkey grants only temporary emergency protection to Syrian refugees to control their movements, which creates a precarious situation and renders them vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination. Local integration seems impossible under these circumstances. She found that daily frustration and the experience of harassment were reported by most interviewees, and only those with a university education seemed to perceive their lives as having improved. The majority of her interviewees, however, had no access to social services or stable and safe employment. Thus, the Turkish government's policy reinforces the citizen/non-citizen binary, while subjecting Syrian refugees to various intersecting fields of precariousness. As a result, illegal journeys to Europe relying on smugglers increased, as well as participation in community and NGO projects, which have left refugees dependent on external aid. These are consequences of Turkey's current migration control regime, which marginalizes Syrian refugees and produces illegality.

## Education, training, jobs: How Germany supports refugees in their host countries

Elke Löbel, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), identified forced migration as a global problem that demands a global solution. Because solutions like resettlement or voluntary repatriation do not work any longer and financial assistance is lacking, there is an urgent need to broaden the discussion about Germany's role in global refugee assistance. Ms Löbel outlined examples where German development assistance currently targets refugee communities in host countries, citing the examples of Lebanon and Turkey. These efforts are part of a larger strategy to stabilize host countries, as most refugees tend to stay in these locations for long periods of time. These examples include a programme to provide education and psycho-social care for up to 200,000 Syrian schoolchildren in Lebanon in cooperation with UNICEF, and a cash-for-work programme that offers basic income and work opportunities for people with no assets to create lasting infrastructure projects. She hoped that these programmes may potentially play a role in rebuilding Syria in the future. Finally, Ms Löbel emphasized that short- and long-term cooperation have to be combined to tackle the global challenge of refugees.

During the ensuing discussion, questions were asked regarding the role of political actors in host communities and transnational networks of refugees, as well as the risks returnees face in their countries of origin. Further questions concerned resilience and how to improve assistance. Panellists suggested that we look more at how refugees self-organize and establish grassroots movements, and to link these to global redistribution schemes. There was also a suggestion to consider the role of mobile technology in how displaced people move and self-organize. Another recommendation was to learn lessons from countries such as Jordan, which manage to efficiently use external support and have proven to be very resilient while hosting large numbers of refugees. Some maintained that development cooperation should play a bigger role in this process, supporting host and displaced communities at the same time. The session concluded with widespread agreement that a political discussion is urgently needed on how to tackle the multiple structural causes of displacement.





The panelists (l. t. r.) \ Elke Grawert, BICC, Olaf Kleist, University of Osnabrück, and Owen Greene, University of Bradford (moderator)

## Going Forward: Key Points for Future Research

In the concluding panel, Olaf Kleist, University of Osnabrück, Claudia Aradau, King's College London, and Elke Grawert, BICC, were asked to reflect on key points that emerged throughout the day and their implications for future research. BICC International Board Member and Moderator Owen Greene, University of Bradford, emphasized the importance of retaining a refugee centric approach in any future research agenda.



Olaf Kleist, University of Osanbrück, offered some reflections on the first panel of the day, beginning with the salient links in each presentation between conflict and displacement: For example, how displacement can be an instrument of conflict, that militancy can be a strategy of the displaced and how the interplay between conflict and displacement can lead to a lack of resources and agency for those displaced. Kleist underscored the value of more research into this complex relationship.

Kleist also noticed that humanitarianism is most often accepted as the main response to the problem of displacement and not subjected enough to critical analysis. Speakers in the first panel highlighted the failures of humanitarian responses in protecting people and the role of these responses in exacerbating the conflict situation. He argued that focussing on humanitarianism as a solution to displacement treats the symptoms and not the underlying problem. The underlying cause is necessarily political, and Kleist argued that humanitarianism may need to more overtly embrace the political in the quest for durable solutions. This means that the humanitarian community may also need to advocate for solutions such as local integration, the granting of asylum by host communities or resettlement. He concluded by asserting that political solutions that protect the rights of the displaced are the only way of breaking the cycle of conflict and displacement.

Claudia Aradau, King's College London, highlighted several themes that emerged predominantly from the second panel. The first theme is the importance of connections between people so that they are able to access resources and exercise agency. She repeated the importance of social and familial networks at the local, translocal and global levels and how these networks enable or (the lack thereof) may prevent mobility. She identified a research gap on the question of digital networks and technologies, which has been critical to the mobility of and access to resources of refugees along the way; for example, applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook have made possible the migration patterns that we see today. Rather than only focussing on how social media and digital technologies have been used for radicalization, Aradau believes that it would be

interesting to consider whether and how these types of networks and technologies can/have changed migration patterns by providing access to education, labour and helping to build new visions of the future. Another theme that Aradau highlighted concerned the use of categories in refugee and displacement discourses. She argued for the need to distinguish between categories of practice and categories of analysis and thus to rethink the language of displacement. She supported the use of terms such as 'forced mobility' and 'immobility' as opposed to 'displacement' because they allow for the consideration of a broader range of issues. She wondered to what extent categories of practice, such as the terms 'refugees', 'migrants' and 'host communities' should also be used as categories of analysis, since these can render many groups of people invisible. She proposed the possibility of new categories such as farmers, residents, urban dwellers, school children and students to make the invisible visible again, such as the over 200,000 failed asylum seekers that are living in destitution in the United Kingdom.

A final theme that Aradau pointed to was the rise of right-wing populism in Europe today and what it means in terms of European migration policy. Here, she emphasized the importance of questions around precarity, because precarity also played a role in the competition between different categories within right-wing populist discourses. She concluded by questioning how we can intervene politically in the public sphere but also in relation to the popular discourses that are heard across Europe.

Elke Grawert, BICC, offered her reflections on the final panel, beginning with the issue of agency. She argued that it is incredibly difficult to identify specific target groups of humanitarian aid in a protracted displacement situation, because a refugee may become a returnee, then a migrant, and then a deportee and so forth. She argued that displaced people are as diverse a group of actors as any in an ordinary society, each with their own political interests. Hence, refugee agency has to come into focus in finding an entry point for change.



**Claudia Aradau** \ pointed to the rise of right-wing populism in Europe today and what it means in terms of European migration policy

Grawert also considered the ambiguous role of the state. Governments are squeezed by too many aid agencies to accept more refugees, but what is the effect of international presence on the power of the state itself? Does it not weaken the state if so many international actors get involved? Grawert stated unequivocally that states produce precarity for refugees and displaced persons by assigning (or denying) legal frameworks, while employers produce precarity by underpaying and taking advantage of the little legal powers these populations possess. Under these circumstances, engaging in criminal circles and illegal activities such as trafficking becomes a viable option for refugees. She noted how humanitarian aid normally lacks an exit strategy and instead creates dependencies on the state, contributing to demographic change and a new social order in an unreflected way. This led Grawert to ask: What then is our shared responsibility for political solutions to protracted displacement? How can the international community help find political solutions if development assistance and humanitarian aid continue to be offered in an unreflected way? She pointed to a potential research agenda on the role of humanitarian aid on the agency of refugees and migrants, particularly since some of these actors provide remittances to people in their place of origin to a much larger extent than development cooperation is able to provide.

In the discussion, Keynote speaker Elizabeth Ferris recommended a switch from the term ‘host communities’ in favour of the term ‘receiving communities’, as it is a more accurate reflection of the experience of these communities. Another comment was made to take the perceptions of receiving communities more seriously in our analyses, including these communities in Europe, because ignoring them has led in part to the rise of right-wing populism. Some argued that the research community on refugees needs to engage more seriously on the decision-making context of politicians in receiving communities to understand how our research can influence these decisions, both positively and negatively.

Some doubts were expressed about the possibility of integration into receiving communities, most notably in poorer receiving communities. Here, the question is, integration into what? Some of these communities have only an informal economy that can hardly absorb new arrivals. Even development cooperation with these poorer communities has not been able to establish more formalized economies over several decades, so it may be naive to discuss integration as a possibility.

Finally, the difficulty of addressing root causes of displacement was underlined—the discussion rarely becomes more specific than referring to ‘root causes’ because these are so political and far-ranging. Some governments are actually profiting from the violence that causes mass displacements, which is the anti-thesis of the humanitarian ideal. If we are going to discuss root causes, it was suggested that we do so in a very specific, intentional manner. It may, therefore, be time for humanitarians to become more political in ways that are more upfront. The session concluded with a general understanding that, while humanitarian aid cannot resolve conflict, it should certainly not make a conflict worse.

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